

# Brethren Evangelist

"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

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## DULL RELIGION

Any lifeless thing is dull. There isn't much animation or interest in a stick. Dullness is the feebleness or absence of that vital stream, divine in its essence, and divinely creative. The man who has feeble intellectual life has a dull time intellectually. Physical poverty blunts the edge of many pleasures and substitutes a weary monotony. Do you find religion dull? Are your Sabbaths a weariness? Does the preacher bore you? Surely it is for the same reason. Dull religion is but a symptom of very little or very feeble religion. The poor thing is anaemic. It looks pale and sickly. Now and then a revival season will galvanize it into a semblance of life, but the real thing isn't there. The more abundant life is far away, and the victim of this pious shadow has a dull time. How to escape this religious ennui is a problem in some society. A fashionable writer speaking of Lent, that forty days season of supposed fasting from 325 days of worldly folly, says that "what with serving classes, musicales, charitable entertainments, lectures, dinner parties, card parties, and the theatre and opera, there is certainly enough to keep from having a dull time." And he adds, as if it was an after thought that might as well be thrown in for what it is worth, "Then there is the church." Yes, there is the church. We may just as well grin and bear it, for there it is, and there it seems likely to stay. Dull? Not altogether so long as we have the other things, the card parties, theatre and opera. We may even do a little charitable work, or go slumming with dainty fingers, the recollection of which will last a whole year. There is a pretty good philosophy in having all our dull time in a lump, for it will make luxury seem by contrast more luxurious, and give indulgence a keener appetite.

Dull religion is after all about the dullest thing under the sun. If you haven't got to the point where your religion interests you, go ask your pastor what you must do to be saved. And when you find that your religious experience is the liveliest, the most thrilling, the largest and brightest experience of your life, then you will not be able to find a dull time even if you hunt for it with lighted candles.

## DID SOME GOOD

A New York preacher thinks that Ingersoll, the agnostic, did a great deal of good in his time by compelling us ministers to "do away with much unnecessary hypocrisy." We wonder how much hypocrisy is necessary in the estimation of this preacher. Where does he draw the line? Should there be an admixture of ten per cent of hypocrisy in our religion, or even more than that? Perhaps it might be a profitable question for each man to ask himself, whether he be preacher or laymen: to what extent am I sincere? Now if we understand the English language, the difference between insincerity and hypocrisy requires an exceedingly fine analysis, so that after all when we get down to the bottom of things, we may find the more disagreeable label the most fitting. It is a difficult subject to deal with, and a very important one, for the whole question of personal power, and perhaps the whole question of personal salvation lies right there. It is difficult also because the point is so elusive that it may be exceedingly difficult for even the most penetrating introspection to detect the precise degree of insincerity in our spiritual make up. Our surface life simply represents a certain amount of concession to public opinion, while our inner life is at best a compromise between inclination and duty. Our creed, or what we profess to believe and practice, is something apart. It is no longer reasonable to expect a man to measure up to his creed. The doctrine of "holiness" as it is set forth by the modern sanctificationists may not be entirely Scriptural, but the alacrity with which we join in the hue and cry against it is suspicious. Perhaps we hope against it more fervently than we disbelieve it.

"Give me truth in the inward parts" prayed the Psalmist. We commend that prayer to one and all. There are very few people who can throw stones with a good conscience at the hypocrite. This may be a "hard saying," but if it causes one disciple to dig to the bottom of himself, it will not fall amiss. Ah, there's the trouble. So many of us stop short of the bottom, and we don't know what's down there; perhaps we are afraid to know. "Search me and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."